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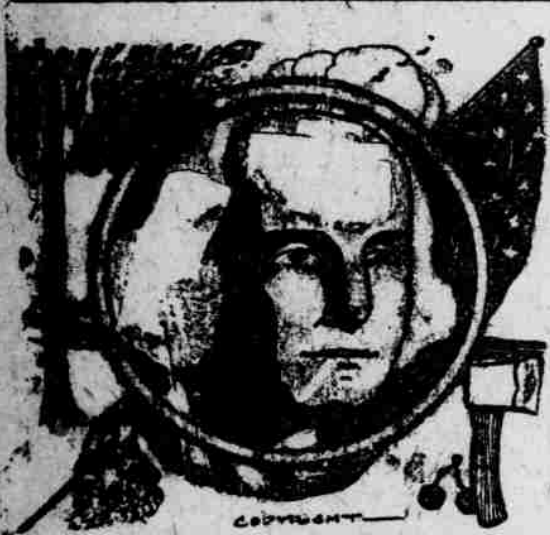
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THE LADY OF THE HEAVENS.

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(Continued.)

"Lady," said the girl, "you who were born white in body and in spirit, hear me. I am but half a Zulu. My father who died yesterday in the flesh, departing back to the world of ghosts, was of another people who live far to the north, a small people but a strong. They live among the trees, they worship trees; they die when their tree dies; they are dealers in dreams, they are the companions of ghosts, little men before whom the tribes tremble; who hate the sun, and dwell in the deep of the forest. Myself I do not know them; I have never seen them, but my father told me these things, and others that I may not repeat. When he was a young man my father fled from his people."

"Why?" asked Rachel, for the girl paused.

"Lady, I do not know; I think it was because he could have been the priest, and he feared. I think that he had seen a woman, a slave to them, whom therefore he might not marry. I think that he was my mother. So he fled from them with her, and came to live among the Zulus. He was a great doctor there in Chaka's time, not one of the Abangomas, not one of the 'Smileers-out-of-witches,' but a 'Bringer-down-to-death,' for like all his race he hated bloodshed. No, none of these things, but a doctor of medicines, a master of magic, an interpreter of dreams, a lord of wisdom; yes, it was his wisdom that made Chaka great, and when he withdrew it from him because of his cruelties, then Chaka died. 'Lady, Dingaan rules in Chaka's place, Dingaan who slew him, but although he had been Chaka's doctor, my father was spared because they feared him. I was the only child of his mother, but he took other wives after the Zulu fashion, not because he loved them, I think, but that he might not seem different to other men. So he grew great and rich and lived in a great house, and he was feared by his people because they feared him. Lady, my father loved me, and to me alone he taught his wisdom, his wisdom. I helped him with his medicines; I interpreted the dreams which he could not interpret, his blanket fell upon me. Often I was sought in marriage, but I did not wish to marry. Wisdom is my husband."

"There came an evil day; we knew that it must come, my father and I, and I wished to fly to the land, but could not do so because of his other wives and children. The maidens of my district were marshalled for the king to see. His eye fell upon Chaka, he thought me fair because I am different from Zulu women, and—you can guess. Yet I was saved, for the other maidens and the head wives of the king said that it was not wise that I should be taken into his house. I who knew too many secrets and could bewitch him if I wished, or poison him with drugs that leave no mark. So I escaped a while and was thankful. Now it came about that because he might not take me Dingaan began to think much of me, and to dream of me at night. At least he asked me of my father, as a gift, not as a right, for so he thought that no ill will would come with me. But I prayed my father to keep me from Dingaan, for I feared him, and told him that if I were sent to the king, I would poison him. My father listened to me because he loved me and could not bear to part with me, and said Dingaan nay. Now Dingaan grew very angry and asked counsel of his other doctors, but they would give him none, because they feared my father. Then he asked counsel of that white man, Hishmel, who is called the Lion, and who is much at the kraal of Umungundhova."

"Still," said Rachel, "how I understand why he wished you to be killed."

"The white man, Hishmel, the jackal in a lion's skin, as you named him, laughed at Dingaan's fears. He said to him, 'It is of the father, Sepayi, you should be afraid. He has the magic; not the girl. Kill the father, and his house, and take the daughter, and whom your heart desires, and be happy.'"

"So spoke Hishmel, and Dingaan thought his counsel good, and paid him for it with the teeth of elephants, and certain women for whom he asked. Now my father foreboded ill, and I also, for both of us had dreamed a dream. Still I did not heed the slayers were almost at the gates, because of his other wives and his children. Nor, save for them would he have fled then, or I either, but he had died after the fashion of his people, as he did at last."

"The White Death," queried Rachel. "Yes, Lady, the White Death. Still the end we fled, thinking to gain the protection of the white men down yonder. I went first to escape the king's men who had orders to take me alive and bring me to him, that is why we were not together at the end. Lady, you know the rest. Hishmel doubtless had seen you, and thinking that the king would kill you, came to me with you. Then we met just as I was about to die, though perhaps not by that soldier's spear, as you thought. I have spoken."

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you knelt down before your dead father?" asked Rachel for the second time, since on this point she was intensely curious.

Again that inscrutable look gathered on the girl's face, and she answered, "Did I not tell you it was for my car alone, O Inkosazana-y-Zoola?"

"I may say, your fate and mine are intertwined; yours and mine and another's, for our spirits are sisters which have dwelt together in past days."

"Indeed," said Rachel smiling, for she who had mixed with them from her childhood knew something of the mysticism of the natives, also that it was often nonsense. "Well, Nole, I love you, I know not why. Perhaps, for all you have suffered. Yet I say to you that if you wish to remain my sister in the spirit, you had better separate from me in the flesh. That jackal man knows your secret, girl, and soon or late will lose the assagai on you."

"Doubtless," she answered, "doubtless many things will come about. But they are doomed to come about. Whether I go or whether I stay they will happen. Say you therefore, Lady, and I will obey. Shall I go or shall I stay, or shall I die before your eyes?"

"It is on your own head," answered Rachel shrugging her shoulders.

"Nay, nay, Lady, you forget, it is on yours also, seeing that if I stay I bring peril on you and your house. Have you then, no order for me?"

"Nole, I have answered—none. Judge you, will not judge. Let Heaven-above judge. Lady, give me a hair from your head."

Rachel plucked out the hair and handed it, a shining thread of gold, to Nole, who drew one from her own dark tresses, and laid them side by side.

"See," she said, "they are of the same length. Now, without a word, blows gently, come then to the door of the tent, and I will throw these two hairs into the wind. If that which is black floats first to the ground, then I stay, if that which is golden, then I go to seek my hair. Is it agreed?"

"It is agreed."

So the two girls went to the entrance of the tent, and Nole with a swift motion tossed up the hairs. As it happened one of those little eddies of wind which are common in South Africa, caught them, causing them to rise almost perpendicularly into the air. At a certain height, about forty feet, the supporting wind seemed to fail, that is so far as the hair from Nole's head was concerned, for there it floated high above them like a black thread in the sunlight, and gently by slow degrees came to the earth just at their feet.

But the hair from Rachel's head, being caught by the fringe of the whirlwind, was borne upwards and onwards very swiftly, until at length it vanished from their sight.

"I think," answered Rachel, "I am very glad; also if any evil comes of it we are not to blame, the wind is to blame."

"Yes, Lady, but what makes the wind blow?"

Again Rachel shrugged her shoulders, and asked a question in her turn. "What makes that hair of mine been borne, Nole?"

"I do not know, Lady. Perhaps my father's spirit took it for his own ends. I think so, for I think it went northwards. At any rate when mine fell, it was snatched away, was not?"

And yet they both floated up together, and the hair from Rachel's head, following that hair of yours, Lady, follow it to the land where great trees whisper secrets to the night."

CHAPTER VII.

The Message of the King.

So it chanced that Nole became a member of the Dove household. For obvious reasons she changed her name, and thenceforward was called Nohla. Also it happened that Mr. Dove abandoned his idea of settling as a missionary in Zululand, and instead, took up his residence at this beautiful spot. He called it Ramah because it was a place of weeping, for there all the family and dependents of Sepayi had been destroyed by the spear. Mrs. Dove thought it an ill-omened name enough, but after her manner gave way to her husband's in the matter.

"I think there will be more weeping here before everything is done," she said.

Rachel answered, however, that it was as good as any other, since names could alter nothing. Here, then, at Ramah, Mr. Dove built him a house on that knoll where first he had pitched his camp. It was a very good house after its fashion, for, as has been said, he did not lack for means, and was, moreover, clever in such matters. He hired a mason who had built the kraal at Natal, to cut stone of which a plenty lay at hand, and two-half breed carpenters to execute the woodwork.

While the Kafirs watched the whole as only they can do. Then he set to work upon a church which was placed on the crest of the opposite knoll where the white man, Hishmel, had appeared on the evening of their arrival. Like the house, it was excellent of its sort, and when at length it was finished after more than a year of labor, Mr. Dove said to himself, "I am indeed at Ramah he was happier than he had ever been since he landed upon the shores of Africa, for now at length he was to be a missionary."

Indeed at Ramah he was happier than he had ever been since he landed upon the shores of Africa, for now at length he was to be a missionary."

So having explained the matter to her father, and obtained his consent, Rachel, who desired to impress these savages, threw a white shawl about her, as Nole instructed her to do. Then letting her long, golden hair hang down, she went out alone carrying a light assagai in her hand, to the place where the messengers, six of them, and those who had driven the cattle from Zululand, were camped in the great kraal, at the gate of which, as it chanced, lay a great boulder of rock. On this boulder she took her stand, unobserved, waiting till the full moon shone out from behind a dark cloud, turning her white robe to silver. Now of a sudden the messengers who were seated together, talking and taking snuff, looked up and saw her.

"Inkosazana-y-Zoola!" exclaimed one of them, rising, whereon they all sprang to their feet and perceiving this beautiful and mysterious figure, by a common impulse lifted their right arms and gave to her what no woman had ever received before—the royal salute. "Bayete!" they cried, "Bayete!" then stood silent.

"I hear you," said Rachel, who spoke their tongue as well as she did her own. "It has been reported to me that you wished to see me, O Mouths of the King. Behold I am pleased to appear before you. What would you of Inkosazana-y-Zoola, O Mouths of the King?"

Then their spokesman, an old man of high rank, with a withered hand, stepped forward from the line of his companions, stared at her for a while, and saluted again.

"Lady," he said humbly, "Lady or Spirit, we would know how thou comest by that great name of thine."

"It was given me as a child far away from here," she answered, "because in a mighty tempest the lightnings turned aside and smote me not; because the waters raged yet drowned me not. It came to me from the high Heaven that was my friend. I do not know how it came."

(To be Continued.)

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That Zulu assagai still lay upon them, for if Chaka was dead Dingaan ruled a few miles away across the Tugela. Moreover, hearing of the rise of this new town and of certain strange matters connected with it, he sent spies to inspect and enquire. The spies returned and reported that there dwelt in it only a white medicine-man with his wife, and a number of Natal Kafirs. Also they reported in great detail many wonderful stories concerning the beautiful maiden with a high name who passed as the white teacher's daughter, and who had already become the subject of so much native talk and rumor. On learning all these things Dingaan despatched an embassy who delivered this message:

"I, Dingaan, king of the Zulus, have heard that you, O White Shouter, have built a town upon my borders, and peopled it with the puppets of the jackals whom Chaka hunted. I send to you now to say that you and your jackals shall have peace from me so long as you harbor no evil against me, but if I find but one of them there, then an impi shall wipe you out. I hear also that there dwells with you a beautiful white maiden, the daughter of your daughter, who is known throughout the land as Inkosazana-y-Zoola. Now that is the name of our Spirit if this is so, I think it is wise, and it is strange to us that this maiden should bear that great name. Some of the Isanusi, the prophetesses, declare that she is our spirit in the flesh, but that men stick in my throat, I cannot swallow it. Still, I invite this maiden to visit me that I may see her and judge of her, and I swear to you and to her by the ghosts of my ancestors, that no harm shall come to her then or at any time. He who so much as lays a finger upon her shall die, he who touches her, shall die, and he who speaks her name, which I am told she has borne from a child, all the territories of the Zulus are her kraal and all the thousands of the Zulus are her servants. Yes, because of her high name I give to her the power of life and death wherever men obey my word, and for an offering I send to her twelve of my royal white cattle and a bull, also an ox trained to riding. When she visits me let her ride upon this white ox that she may be known, but let her come with her four attendants, for among the people of the Zulus she must be attended by Zulus only. I have spoken. I pray that she who is named Princess of the Zulus will appear before my messengers and acknowledge the gift of the King of the Zulus, that they may see her in the flesh and make report on to me."

Now when Mr. Dove had received this message, one evening at sundown, he went into the house and repeated it to Rachel, for it puzzled him much, and he knew not what to answer.

Rachel in her turn took counsel with Nole who was hidden away lest some of the embassy should see and recognize her.

"Speak with the messengers," said Nole, "it is well to have power among the Zulus. I, who have some knowledge of their language, say, speak with them alone, and speak softly, saying that one day you will come."

So having explained the matter to her father, and obtained his consent, Rachel, who desired to impress these savages, threw a white shawl about her, as Nole instructed her to do. Then letting her long, golden hair hang down, she went out alone carrying a light assagai in her hand, to the place where the messengers, six of them, and those who had driven the cattle from Zululand, were camped in the great kraal, at the gate of which, as it chanced, lay a great boulder of rock. On this boulder she took her stand, unobserved, waiting till the full moon shone out from behind a dark cloud, turning her white robe to silver. Now of a sudden the messengers who were seated together, talking and taking snuff, looked up and saw her.

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